

FOLK BELIEFS AND RITUALS



The pendent of the jade axe

It was and is still a common tradition among Mongolians to embellish a baby's rug, swaddling clothes and coats with various pendent which are deemed to be propitious for babies. These omens are precious stone, silver, copper-axe, bows and arrows, bells, models of felt-fox, shells, ankle-bones of stags, fangs of boars, and spine of fish, a tamarisk, a red caragana, or a model of a tiger. There is, also, very commonly even today, a piece of silver or a jade axe to embellish baby's coat. The purpose of this embellishment is to manipulate the angel of death. We also give our children a small axe. This is the symbol of invincibility. It is believed that the axe-shaped pendent can mislead the angel of death and protect the children from the angel of death.

The enclosure of a wolf's mouth

With the purpose to protect the animals that spend their nights under the stars from the perils of wolves, a stone is placed between the movable arms of the fire-tongs, and the following spell is recited:



*"Let's jam the snarling jaws of the
Sharp-fanged, dear Mascot;
May the animals on the steppe
Be safe and sound"*

We also bind and place the two arms of the fire-tongs between two layers of roof-covering on the southwest part of the *ger*, near the door. These two arms of fire-tongs are implied as the two jaws. The stone means the animals and enclosure of the wolf's mouth.

The pendent of the wolf's dib

The wolf is our totem. This kind of concept is still alive among the Mongolians. If you encounter a wolf on the way to travel far, to do business or to search animals, we Mongolians believe that our aims can be achieved well. Even if a wolf attacks our domestic animals, we do not think it as a bad omen. It is regarded that the mouth of wolf can bring a good luck. The theft can bring bad luck. That is why individual Mongolians carry a wolf's dib or fang with him/her. Because there is a folk belief that it might bring a good luck or keep a baby safe. We also adorn the child with a wolf's dib.



The stiff spines of the hedgehog

There is a tradition among Mongolians that they place stiff spines of the hedgehog on the threshold or hang a bunch of hedgehog spines on the lintel over the door. They also carry the spines of the hedgehog with themselves to ward off the perils of life at home or at the lawsuit.

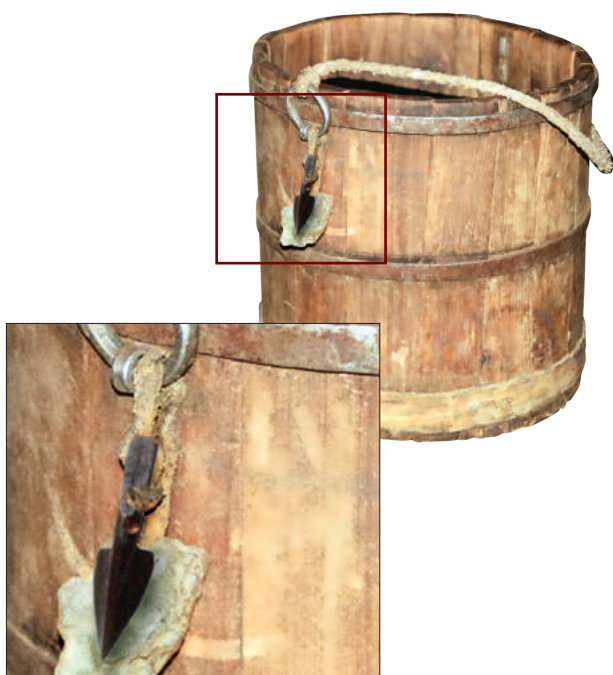
The whip made of an antelope's shank

It is customary for the Mongolian child-jockeys of swift horses carry the shank-whips of antelopes by wishing their riding-horse be swift like antelope.



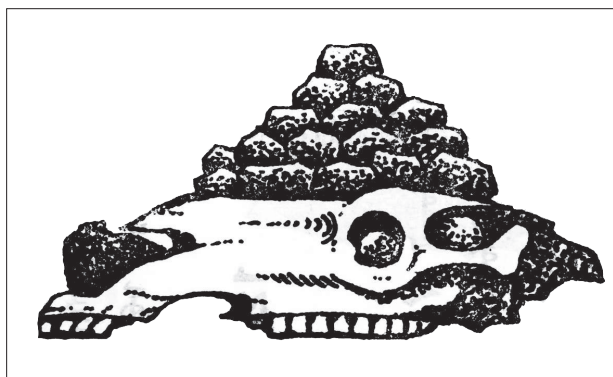
The embellishment of pail of milk with copper-arrow

The bronze-arrow was the object of worship of ancient Mongolians. They deem it as heaven's object as it is an ancient object - dates back to the Bronze Age. They embellish the pail of milk with bronze-arrow to prevent the inflammation of the udder of animals.



The worship of a horse cranium

Mongolians show great reverence for horses and deem horses as valuable as the gem topaz; the swift horse, in particular, is held in veneration. There is a custom to venerate the cranium of the swift horse. According to this belief, there is a spirit in the cranium of the swift horse, so we place it on the top of the rock or stone-cairn. In order to do this, we stuff blue droppings of a horse in the socket of the dried cranium, pile a white grit on the cranium and say '*khurai, khurai, khurai*'. If a traveler encounters a stone-cairn with a horse's cranium, he should dismount and add grit to the stone-cairn.



To make a child blazed coney

Mongolians make their children 'blazed coney' when we take them out of their homes at evening or night. To make a child blazed coney means that the child's parents or relatives mark a black stripe from pot soot on the baby's forehead. The purpose of this is to mislead a devil or demon who might harm a baby. There are certain numbers of such kind's of living customs.



The pendent of brachiopod's head

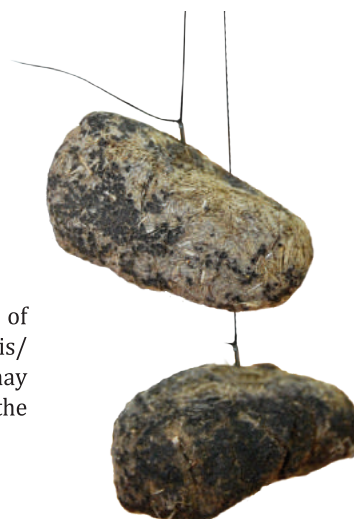
This is a fossil of brachiopod of the ancient epoch. There are many fossils in Mongolia, particularly in Gobi. The fossils look like outstretched winged animals lying down. These lime stones are called by local people as outstretched winged stones. Herders collect lime stone and case it by felt and hang it on a ram's neck, which is a very ancient custom. As birds never miscarry, it is believed that, by doing so, they can prevent from any miscarry of domestic animals.

So our ancestors' wish was that their domestic animals never miscarry or slink.



Lead casting

When an infant wails frequently, it is believed that the infant is frightened from something and if he/she sees the figure of that, the fear will be gone. Then the melted lead is poured into the cold water in a bucket. As a result, the lead hardens in the water and is transformed into a kind of figure. Then this figure is attached to the swaddling-cloth or sleeve of coat.



Pair of the pellets of horse

A person who is collecting cow chips can sometimes find a pair of horse pellets. This person sees this as a sign of good luck on his/her domestic animals and a wish that they might multiply. They may even place it on the upper end of the trellised wall of ger, reciting the spell for multiplication of animals.

IPhallicism

It was once popular in Mongolia to make male and female phalli and deem them as a symbol of generative principle. Let's take an example. There is a valley which is called the Valley of the Womb. There is a phallus sculpture made of granite. The local people call it the penis stone. There is another phallus which is vulva-shaped, located in the gully opposite to the valley. There was also a phallus carved from the elm trunk in the *Shiliin Gol Aimag* of Inner Mongolia.

